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ABSTRACT

Noting that school activities, in general, are judged by the extent to which they achieve their academically defined goals, this paper contends that schools serve another purpose, a social one. Arguing that schools should help children learn social responsibility and prosocial behavior and attitudes, the paper provides a rationale for, and a perspective from which, school activities may be viewed according to a social orientation. The paper uses the work of 20th century philosopher Martin Buber as the basis of this rationale and perspective. Drawing upon the Buberian perspective, the paper describes three literacy learning classrooms, representing three different pedagogical orientations to literacy learning: (1) a traditional-eclectic literacy learning approach, (2) a mastery learning approach, and (3) an open-informal approach to learning to read and write. The paper describes specific settings and events from each classroom in terms of Buber's notion of community building. (Author/FL)

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A Buberian Critique of Three Literacy Learning Classrooms

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Abstract

In general, school activities are judged by the extent to which they achieve their academically defined goals. Schools, however, serve another purpose. That second purpose is a social one. With this social goal, school activities might also be evaluated by the extent to which they help children learn social responsibility, and prosocial behaviors and attitudes. This paper provides a rationale for and a perspective from which school activities may be viewed according to this social orientation. This rationale and perspective is largely based upon the work of Martin Buber, a 20th century philosopher. Using a Buberian perspective, three literacy learning classrooms, representing three quite different pedagogical orientations to literacy learning are described. The three classrooms represent a traditional-eclectic literacy learning approach, a mastery learning approach, and an open-informal approach to learning to read and write. Specific settings and events from each classroom are described in terms of Buber's noton of community building.

Very often, if not always, the way we see something is largely a function of the perspective we take in looking at that something. A pyramid, for example, if it could be seen from the bottom might look to be a square or a triangle. A circular object with a hole in the center may appear to be either a donut, an automobile tire, or a life preserver depending upon whether the observer worked in a bakery, at the Goodyear Tire Company, or on the Love Boat.

The same notion applies to issues of education and schooling. The way that one looks upon schooling depends upon the perspective that one takes or the goals that one sets for schooling. Undoubtedly, one of the dominant perspectives for schools today and one that has been dominant for several years sees schools as places where children learn skills that make them economically viable and productive in their adult lives. With the acceleration of the development of new technologies schools have been hard put to meet the challenge of producing able bodied and able minded technicians. Indeed, the extent to which schools have been challenged and coerced into meeting the goals set by this academic-skill perspective is demonstrated by the extent to which other perspectives have been forced into the background. Thus, in many schools, for example, kindergarten is no longer a place for children to play but a place where they begin to get to work in ther quest for the right skills for the right job.

Martin Buber, a 20th century philosopher, poet, and theologian, offers a different perspective for life and, in a more focused sense, education. He divides his world into two parts which reflect different types of interactions and relationhips that can develop between persons. These interactions and relationships are

either of an I-It or an I-Thou nature:

"To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks.

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.

The one primary word is the combination I-Thou.

The other primary word is the combination I-It...

Hence the I of man is also twofold.

For the I of the primary word I-Thou is a different I from that of the primary word I-It...

I perceive something. I am sensible of something. I imagine something. I will something. I feel something. I think something. The life of human beings does not consist of all this and the like alone.

This and the like together establish the realm of It.

But the realm of Thou has a different basis.

When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every It is bounded by others. But when Thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has no bounds...

> If I face a human being as my Thou, and say the primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things...
>
> Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lines, but they must be tugged and dragged till their unity has been scattered into these many pieces, so with the man to whom I say Thou. I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be Thou...
>
> I do not experience the man to whom I say Thou. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more. In the act of experience Thou is far away." (Buber, 1958, pp.3,4,8 and 9).

According to Buber when a person sees another as a Thou a true relationship of mutuality, sharing, and dialogue exists. One sees himself or herself in relation to the other and the other affects that person's own existence. When a person sees another as an It he or she objectifies that person and sees him or her as a thing that can be experienced, or used, or manipulated. The I-Thou relationship is one of unity, of community among persons, while the I-It expresses separation and differentiation of the individual self from the surrounding world. Both stances are necessary, but Buber leaves little doubt as to which he holds in highest esteem when he writes: "And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot

live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man" (Buber, 1958, p. 34).

Buber focuses in on these two stances in his essay Education (1961). In this piece he identifies two instincts which are necessary for human life and which correlate with the I-It and I-Thou. These are the instinct for origination or creativite endeavor and the instinct for community. The instinct for origination is the drive in man to be creative and to achieve, to make something. When a child writes a story, draws a picture, or constructs a model she is exercising her instinct to be creative. It is this instinct that seems to receive the overwhelming amount of attention in schools.

The other and equally important instinct is the one that is exercised when a child becomes involved with other children in a common undertaking, when she becomes a part of an achievement rather than the sole achiever. This is the instinct for community. This instinct balances against the instinct for origination. Indeed, when the child discovers and is involved in a community of work with others she ceases to follow the originative instinct alone. She begins to learn the Thou of relationship and dialogue and mutuality.

In their research Hepler and Hickman (1982) discuss the development of a community of readers in a classroom in which reading is not only valued but is given the status of something to be shared and talked about with others. In their observations this community of readers became an enthusiastic audience as well as a source of ideas for response activities for other students and their readings.

Throughout the school year small clusters of children came together to read books as a group. One group of fifth grade boys stayed and worked and read together throughout the entire year going

from informational type books to books of fiction. Although the aspects of community that were evident in this classroom may have been independent and unintentional from the overt literacy curriculum, there is little doubt that the freedom and encouragement given to the students by the teacher to read with other students is an excellent example of schooling that nurtures the community instinct at the same time as the instinct for origination.

Buber writes that "an education based only on the training of the instinct of origination would prepare a new human solitariness which would be most painful..." (p.87). Further, he adds, "What teaches us the saying of Thou is not the originative instinct but the instinct for communion" (p.88).

Weinstein (1975) interprets Buber as saying that real education is not manifested through the creative instinct. Education means growing and becoming and these are made possible only through interpersonal relations and encounters with others, not through the solitude that is inherent in activities based only on the instinct of origination. Cohen (1983), in a recent interpretation of Buber, claims that the true significance of educational activity lies not in the release and growth of a particular creative drive or aptitude but in the forces that encounter or meet with that creative drive. In other words, what is of great importance educationally lies not in the mere doing of a task but in who and what one meets in the accomplishing of that task. The instinct for origination, conversely, is concerned with the release and expansion of the creative drive, and not necessarily in what is encountered along the way. Buber's philosophy of education, according to Cohen, places special emphasis on the need for "realization" in a person's relationship with the

world. By "realization" Buber means the act of realizing or internally picturing the senses, feelings, or thinking of another person at a particular moment. Thus, what is experienced is perceived as an integral part of the person's own life, not something separate from it. The experience is something like the genuine sharing of grief- a felt participation in the sorrow experienced by another. For the self, that is the individual, to flourish and grow, the self must realize another's self while at the same time the other person is conscious of this realization, which is mutually declared. Only through this realization and recognition of the Thou can growth, true education occur.

Dewey and Others

Buber is not alone in arguing for such a dual and integrative approach to education. John Dewey, early on, saw the need for schools to be more than content or curriculum oriented. In School and Society (1900) he wrote that the instilling of cooperation, motivation, and experience into the schools ...

> "...means to make each one of our schools an embryonic community life with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community saturating him with the spirit of service... we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious." (p. 29).

Several years later in Democracy and Education (1916) Dewey further discussed this notion of community when he defined community

as the essence of democracy. He posited:

> "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full importance of their activity... These points of contact among individuals secure a liberation of powers which remain suppressed as long as the incitations to action are partial, as they must be in a group which in its exclusiveness shuts out many interests" (p. 101).

To Dewey the development of a democratic spirit and way of thinking in students was an essential and ultimate goal of education. Schools that followed Dewey's model attempted to incorporate within themselves aspects of community and to make connections outside themselves to the larger community. In his Schools of To-morrow (Dewey and Dewey, 1915) he gave glimpses of ways that this education for community could be put into practice. In one school system (in Indiana) he told of children from various grade levels being "thrown together as much as possible" (p. 195) in real tasks. For example, fourth and fifth grade students worked as assistants to junior high students in shop, studio, and laboratory classes. The older children found responsiblity and cooperation from caring for the younger ones. The fourth and fifth graders, on the other hand, learned much through

helping, observing, and asking questions of the older students working on meaningful projects. Usually, when we hear about cross-grade tutoring it involves the older students coming down to the younger children's level. In this case the younger ones went up to the level of the older students without apparent difficulty. In this school system people from the larger community were also always welcome and encouraged to come to the schools and tell the chidren about what they were doing. In another school (pp. 218-219) older students were paired with small children. The older student took responsibility to see that his charge had a fair chance to play on the playground, that he was properly attired, that he behaved himself, etc. In short, a familial atmosphere of brotherhood was fostered.

In a recent article on education in America, philosopher Andrew Oldenquist (1983) points to the hyper-individualist orientation taken by schools in the 1960's and 70's as one of the reasons for the decline of education during this period. He says this:

> "Hyper-individualists dropped the social goal and saw the aim of education in terms of 'self-image', 'feeling good about oneself', and 'self-esteem'. They no longer sought to train children for life as members of a society; they at best taught them to view society as hostile terrain in which they must cope, at worst to be predators and parasites on society. This move from 'social adjustment' to 'self image' as a goal of education is a good example of the individualism gone-mad of the 60's and 70's". (p. 15).

No doubt one might take issue with his attack on the

development of self-esteem in children, but his point concerning the lack of a common social goal and experience in schools is an important one. His claim is that academic achievement and schooling for community (Buber's I-It and I-Thou) are linked together and that as the social orientation of schools shifted away from community academic achievement also fell.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974), a noted developmental psychologist, suggests that a disturbing trend has been developing in this country over the past two decades. That trend is an increasing isolation and alienation of the young people of the nation from the general society. This alienation is manifested in actions such as increases in violent crime involving the young, drug abuse among the youth, etc. Bronfenbrenner argues that there are two major sources of this alienation. One is the disintegration of the American family and the other is the American school. In referring to the school he states:

> "...the institution that has probably done the most to keep children insulated from challenging social tasks is the American school system... Our schools, and consequently the children, are also physically insulated from the life of the community, neighborhood, and families that the schools purport to serve and from the life for which they are supposedly preparing the children. And the insularity is repeated within the school system itself, where children are segregated into classrooms that have little social connection with one another or with the school as a common community for which members can take active responsibility... As

> a result the schools have become one of the most potent breeding grounds of alienation in American society. For this reason it is of crucial importance for the welfare and development of school-age children that schools be integrated into the life of the community" (p. 60).

Bronfenbrenner thus argues that schools have not only isolated themselves from the community within and outside the school, but also from social tasks associated with those communities. In such a context of isolation relationships of an I-Thou nature are difficult to form and maintain. Indeed, as Oldenquist might suggest, in such an environment a hidden or covert curriculum which overemphasizes the self begins to develop. Thus, such instructional concepts as self-worth, self-concept, individualized instruction, self-paced materials, viewing each child only as an individual take on a life of their own and establish a firm rooting in the educational milieu with little regard to notions of otherness.

What to do?

Given that schools serve this dual purpose of fostering an attitude of I-It, that is academic content, as well as relationship building of an I-Thou nature, how do schools address such a diverse charge? One approach would be to make the development of social responsibility and the doing of community-oriented tasks a separate area of the curriculum. Thus, in addition to having certain times of the day for physical education, social studies, science, and mathematics schools would also fit into their course of study a time for community living or social responsibility development replete with its own goals, content and instructional activities. Recently I came

across a book that was geared for teaching pre-school children about social life and caring for others (Yawkey and Jones, 1982). It is full of activities that are supposedly designed to teach the children about social responsibility. The activities are similar in many ways and I would like to share one with you. In this one activity, titled "Spying", the children are to get empty toilet paper rolls and fasten them together to form a set of binoculars. Then with these binoculars in hand the children are to be taken to the neighborhood park where they are to observe people in the park through their eye-pieces. They are to look for ways that people act in a public place. This is later to become the basis for a class discussion on social living and people's right to privacy.

Another attempt to teach community and caring is apparently made in the Caring workbook (Reiff, 1981) of the That's Life series. What is different here is that the workbook uses cartoon scenarios to depict what are supposed to be real-life problem situations. Moreover, the workbook attempts to be objective based and integrative with other aspects of the curriculum. Thus, in this workbook program, that is supposedly geared to introduce students to notions of community, caring, and social responsibility, there is a pretest and a postttest which contain test items such as, fill in the correct adjective, add commas to sentences where needed, and put quotation marks around words that a speaker says. The learning activities include such things as 25 multiplication and division problems (five of which are of the word or story type) and a fill-in-the-blank acitivity where the students supply the correct verb to a sentence and then identify it as either a present verb, a present continuous verb, a past verb, a future verb, or a special past verb.

I do not think either Buber or Dewey would suggest that these types of activities nor this peculiar attempt at the integration of the I-Thou with the rest of the curriculum is the proper way to proceed. Buber suggests that both the I-Thou and I-It orientations are important, that they are a part of real life, and as such need to be integrated in naturally occurring ways. Dewey suggests that real life tasks be the heart of the school curriculum. That is, that the children learn reading, mathematics, science, social studies within the context of real tasks based upon the interests of the students. Within these tasks or projects students can learn about working with others, sharing a job as well as an achievement, and having a common goal to work toward. A task to learn about dinosaurs, for example, can become a community project in which relationships, dialogue, sharing, and mutuality -characteristics of the I-Thou orientation- are allowed to grow and flourish.

Even in literacy learning notions of community with others and dialogue can be fostered. A variety of programs already exist that foster literacy learning while developing in children a sense of community and caring. These curricula use literacy events as ways of approaching the issues of community. An example of one such program is in a school district very near the Ohio State campus. In this particular curricular program junior high students are paired with elderly residents of a retirement village. In these pairings the students learn history first hand and apply their literacy skills to real learning tasks. They keep daily journals of their experiences, they read articles about aging and communication, they write oral histories as provided by their partners, and they construct books that they share with their partners. The results of this program have been

most satisfying, both academically as well as socially.

Now all schools do not have programs such as this where literacy becomes a part of community building. But even in classrooms where reading and writing are taught pretty much in the traditional way, for their own intrinsic values, Buber's notion of the I-Thou still apply.

Recent research into the nature of the reading process has suggested that reading is not only influenced by linguistic and psychological factors, but also by sociological variables as well. Thus reading can be viewed and evaluated in terms of the linguistic, psychological, and sociological factors that influence its development in children. Using an analogy from experimental methodology reading is the dependent variable while the linguistic, psychological, and social factors are the independent variables that influence and constrain reading in children.

The Buberian notion of reading and learning to read is somewhat different but yet complementary to this view just posed. Returning to that experimental analogy reading, literacy learning is now viewed as the independent variable that plays a role in community building. The building of community and the learning of social responsibility are seen as the dependent variables. In other words, learning to read and write should become experiences that foster a sense of community in children. Taking this view and applying it to classroom literacy learning we get another yardstick by which literacy learning might be evaluated. Reading and writing instruction should be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they contribute to building community, mutuality, sharing, dialogue and social responsibility in children as well as the extent to which the very

same instruction helps children become independent, critical, eager, and life-long readers. Thus, the Buberian view suggests not one but two important and related constructs on which to assess schools in general and literacy instruction in particular: an academic base and a social-community base.

Fostering a Sense of Community in the Classroom

In the fall of 1983, Diane DeFord and Tim Rasinski began studing two styles of first grade classrooms, traditional and Mastery Learning. They were looking for how the classroom context would influence the childrens' writing, what they wrote and how they wrote it. In January of 1984 I was added as a research assistant, along with another classroom. The addition of an informal class gave a new perspective to the study. The children in this class were producing radically different writing samples from the other two classes. But it was not only their writing which intrigued us. We began to realize that the social dynamics of the informal class were also radically different from the others. With this in mind, Tim and I decided to explore the idea of community in the three classrooms. How does each classroom foster or inhibit a sense of community, both the comminity within each class and the larger community outside of the school.

I will begin with the informal classroom, giving a brief description of the class followed by discussion of how a sense of community was fostered. I will continue with the traditional and then the Mastery Learning classrooms, comparing them both to the informal class and to each other.

The Informal Classroom

Walking into the informal classroom one is immediately impressed with the amount of children's work displayed. Paintings and drawings are carefully mounted and pinned, taped, or otherwise stuck to all available wall space, along with their accompanying stories. The stories have all come from the children themselves, whether originally written, dictated, or a combination of the two. Pleasing color is everywhere, not the overwhelming brashness from too many Disney posters, but a delightful array of the children's talents.

At first glance the tables and chairs appear to be placed in a haphazard fashion. Further scrutiny reveals a deliberate and well thought-out system. Each of the four corners is set up for a specific purpose: the sharing/story corner, bounded by a book shelf; the reading corner with overstuffed chairs, the playhouse corner which contains dresses, shoes, kitchen set-up, and other essentials of daily living; and the art corner with its supply of paints, paper, materials, colors, etc. Dividing this classroom from the adjacent class is a movable partition. This remains open and serves as a block area which is used by both groups of children. The rest of the room is taken up with tables and chairs set up so that children may work in groups or alone as they choose. The room is carpeted and full of bookcases ad cubby holes which help to absorb the sound of children working.

The children are definitly working. Reading, writing, constructing, and dramatizing are going on all of the time. even making chicken soup. The teacher is constantly conferencing with her

students, she asks them to tell her about what they've drawn, read to her what they've written and discuss ideas about what else they might do.

The atmosphere is warm and relaxed. A stranger fits in with no disruption of class routine, in fact, strangers are hardly noticed at all, adults come and go easily.

Opportunities for building a sense of community appear to be numerous in the informal classroom. The group comes together at various time of the day for various purposes. They begin the day on the floor in the sharing corner to discuss class business, special events and ongoing projects. The children have learned to take responsibility for each other in small but meaningul ways. They make sure that everyone has all the needed materials, when someone has been absent two or three children will remind the teacher of what he has missed. The children do their own lunch count everyday, taking care of all the paperwork themselves. The first graders have even taken it upon themselves to get the kindergarteners into their coats and boots and lined up to go home at noon when the teacher was held up at a meeting.

At least twice a day the group comes together to listen to an adult read them a story. Most of the time their teacher has this honor, but sometimes a student teacher, a mother who's come to help, or another adult will read to them. The children freely share their opinions, comments, reactions, and analysis with each other. There is a great deal of comparison to other books done during these sessions.

Before going home for lunch and at the end of the day the

group comes together to share the work they have been doing during the day. Those who have completed work will talk about it to the group and ask for questions and comments. I was impressed by the positive nature of the group's response. They will typically say things such as, "I like the way you talked about the dog in that part." Incidentally, this is exactly how the teacher responds to their work.

Four times a day the entire group comes together in order to share some of the important things in their lives. The sense of family is nurtured in this classroom. But it is not only as a group that community feeling is fostered. The children's personal work is a collaboration between the student and the teacher. The teacher helps to draw out and focus the students' ideas, she continually checks back on their progress and encourages them to get feedback from other students as well.

The students' personal work is drawn from the larger community, they get their ideas and models from books, movies, class theme units, other classes in the school, and other children. The outside world is continually brought into the school: moms come to make bread and chicken soup, books and movies on a wide variety of topics are shared in class, class themes are concept oriented centering around such topics as growing plants, flying things, measuring, and colors. For an entire month the school dedicated its activities to Tomie DePaola and his books. Community members were brought in to talk to the whole school, people who represented the life portrayed in DePaola's books. An Italian immigrant, a nun, a juggler, a sheep shearer, they even had a Grandparents' Day. Many classes in the school wrote letters to people in a retirement home, others wrote letters to Old Befana after she had paid them a surprise

vist. The author himself climaxed the festivities by spending whole day at the school giving workshops and seeing what the children had done during the preceding month.

Individual work is shared on a one-to-one basis with others in the class as well as in other parts of the school. The teacher will ask a child who has completed something to take it to three other people and either read it or talk about it to those people. This practice, along with the group sharing, gives everyone a feeling of having participated in each other's work and having shared in the pride of a job well done.

Not all work is done individually. Children get together to build with the large blocks, construct dioramas and murals, dramatize in the playhouse area, and read to each other. The feeling of working together is very strong in this classroom. The children have an investment in each other and care about the group as a community. The teacher's model is an important influence in this respect; by her actions she makes it clear that each child is important and that everyone has a responsibility to the group.

Nel Noddings (1982), in her paper on caring, talks about three aspects of caring: engrossment, attitude, and observable action. Using her criteria we see the teacher in the informal classroom as a wonderful example of a genuinely caring person. She is engrossed in the children-- her consciousness, to paraphrase Noddings, is focused on the children. Whatever she actually does is made meaningful by the attitude she conveys to her students, and she enters into a relation with her students without interference or control but with negotiation and the ability to see the students' reality.

The Traditional Classroom

The traditional classroom revolves around the children's desks. They are placed in clusters of 4-5 in the middle of the room. Children can turn in their desks to face either the chalkboard on one side or the t.v. and windows on the other side. The walls are decorated mostly with commercially made teaching aides, although some children's work is displayed on the door and hangs from the ceiling. There is a bright, orderly and busy atmosphere. The reading corner holds books and a cassette player with six headphones, a systems 80 reading machine is in another corner, an art table stands at the end of the room, and there is a computer in the hall.

Reading groups are divided by ability. The teacher will spend some time going over the workbook pages which need to be completed outside of the reading group, then she has the children read from the stories in their basal readers. She does quite a bit of prompting when children have difficulty with words, but she does not pressure them. It is obvious that she cares about how the children feel, she is patient and encouraging.

Writing activites have changed since the beginning of this year. In October the teacher was assuming that the children could write very little. Her assignments were tightly structured and allowed for very little choice on the part of the students. By contrast, in March she was reading stories to them and asking them to write their own versions. In one instance Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day became "Patti and the Super, Wonderful, Totally Awesome, Very Great Day." When she first began to give them these open ended assignments there was an obvious

reaction of confusion and anxiety in the children. They questioned her frequently and were unsure of ther work. By March, however, they had become comfortable with their own abilities and enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

It does not appear that instilling a sense of community is one of the by-products in the traditional classroom that we studied. There is more emphasis on taking responsibility for oneself, the children do not watch out for each other as much as in the informal classroom. There are, however, several instances in which the class as a community becomes important.

At the beginning of each day the group comes together to discuss daily business. The children stay in their desks during this time, but they are all encouraged to have some input into what is going on. Three to five times a week the teacher will bring the group together to hear a story. Sometimes they stay in their desks but more frequently they all sit on the floor in front of the teacher. She talks to them about the book as she reads it and asks for their reactions. The children will share personal experiences which relate to the book's theme.

Children work with friends at the various learning centers around the room. They also collaborate on art projects and consult each other while doing individual seatwork. The teacher encourages their working together, only asking for quiet when the noise level becomes disturbing. A pen pal letter writing activity was introduced at one point. The purpose was to bring the children in contact with students in another school as well as to give a functional framework

for learning the conventions of letter writing. As a means to bring the outside community into the classroom the activity was certainly commendable, although the overstructured presentation resulted in 30 almost identical letters.

Most individual work is graded and returned to the students with no sharing or revisions done. Once in a while she will have the class draw and write on a particular theme and put all of their papers into a class book. These books are then put out on a shelf so that children may read them when they wish. Some artwork and stories the children have written are displayed around the room, however, most of the decorations, as has been mentioned before, are commercial.

Assignments to be completed during the day are non-negotiable, individual projects. There is no feeling of a community working together. Each child, though she may talk about her work to her neighbor and even ask for ideas, is involved in completing her personal task within the given time limit. Though the teacher has been moving from very structured assignments to more open-ended ones she continues to be the principle giver of ideas and evaluations. Assignments are drawn from school textbooks as well as original ideas from the teacher. She has mentioned that she would like to be more innovative but is restrained by the principal who is very curriculum-bound.

Returning to Noddings' model of caring, we find in the traditional classroom teacher a moderately caring person. Her classroom is warm and friendly, but she has fixed ideas about the results she wishes to achieve. If a child gives an unexpected response she will try to nudge the student onto her own line of thought rather than understand and follow the child's ideas. Her

consciousness is not focused on the children but rather on the teaching itself. Her attitude is not so much towards facilitating as leading.

The Mastery Learning Classroom

The Mastery Learning classroom is neat and orderly. It is sparsely decorated with commercially made teaching aides. One bulletin board is reserved for outstanding examples of students' writings. There is a list of activities the children may work on as they complete their assigments, for example: make a list of words that mean more than one, put a column of words in a-b-c order.

A bookcase under the windows has a variety of books on one shelf. The children are permitted to select books only when all other work has been finished. It is not uncommon to see a child take 10 minutes to select a book, return to his desk and flip through it in 30 seconds, then return to the book shelf.

Children progress at their own pace in reading and writing. Each class is ability tracked, within each class the teacher has grouped the children into high and low reading groups. Reading group time begins with the children reading through several long lists of words repeating each word three times while holding their index fingers out to the word chart in order to hold their place. The teacher will then give them new word endings and, using flashcards, lead them through a routine of say-spell-sound-write-say the word. She also has whole sentences for them to read which she has written out, no pictures are involved.

The teacher's manner is quick and efficient. The children

know what to expect and what is expected of them. Most of the children have no problem reading the words and sentences presented to them. It is interesting to note that when they do read aloud from books their reading tends to sound like their word list chanting.

The programmed rituals of the Master Learning classroom did not lend themselves to a class-as-community spirit. There were only two times during a school day that we saw the children come together as a whole group. The first was for a few minutes at the beginning of the day to discuss class business and special events, followed by the pledge of allegience. The only other time they would group together would be for bathroom breaks, however, for this activity the children were lined up and marched out into the hall where they had to stand on the corners of the tile squares on the floor while waiting for each person to take his turn. We never saw the teacher read a trade book, or any book, to the group, nor did we see the children collaborating on group projects.

All work was individualized; there was never an end to the things that one could do, alone, at one's desk. The children did not confer with each other as in the traditional classroom, or suggest and evaluate as in the informal classroom. Though they did speak to one another, talk was very constrained. In one instance the teacher had them set their folders on end on their desks to serve as isolators while they practiced their word lists. Interactions in the reading group were always teacher-initiated /student-response. The children rarely asked questions or spoke to each other, there was never discussion, only teacher cues or questions and student

responses.

The only individual work shared with the whole group were the few exceptional papers the teacher pinned up on a bulletin board behind her desk. Howver, since movement around the room was limited, very few children were able to look at these displayed works.

The teacher in this classroom was definitely the center of all activities. The children were dependent upon her for all decisions to be made, including what they should do when they had completed 15 workbook pages, when they could go to the bathroom (no exceptions) and when they could read a book. We watched helplessly as one young fellow held his arm in the air for at least 10 minutes waiting to be recognized. In an attempt to rescue him I asked what it was that he needed. Knowing full well that I could be of no help to him he replied, "I've finished 10 workbook pages and I want to know if I should do 10 more or something else."

In the informal classroom the children became responsible for each other, in the traditional classroom they became responsible for themselves, in the Mastery Learning class the teacher was responsible for everything and the children were left with a sense of powerlessness.

Class assignments were drawn completely from textbook curriculums. We saw none of the outside world creeping into the class, no parents, no theme units, only ourselves. Instead of a feeling of community there was a sense of competition. Each child was expected to complete a given amount of work and learn it well enough to pass a criterion referenced, timed test in order to move on to the next level. They were not competing with each other, they were competing with themselves. Even in competition the community spirit was

missing.

The teacher in this class is a warm person interested in the wellbeing of her students. However, using Noddings' caring criteria she does not fare as well as the other two. Her engrossment is not with the children but with the curriculum. Following the established routine came before understanding the child's immediate reality. Her attitude is one of strict control and prompt interference, negotiaiton is not even a question in her class.

She is not a terrible person with a whip in her hand, she is a dedicated, efficient manager who believes she is doing the best for her students. But we must look closely at the values being passed on in this and each of these classrooms. How do the children see themselves? What do they believe is their place in this world? Do they feel themselves tc be integral parts of the larger community with valuable ideas to be shared and the power to act? Or do they see their place as followers, waiting for others to dictate their futures, channel their energies, without a sense of community involvement?

Diane, Tim and I started out looking for how classroom context influences writing-- we are finding that it influences much, much more.

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